

*over (John) Successive Bishops of
Bangor & Archbishop of*

THREE LETTERS

TO HIS GRACE THE
Archbishop of Canterbury;

ON THE
P R A Y E R
FOR
HIS MAJESTY'S RECOVERY.

CONTAINING
A COMPARISON between it and that of the JEWS,

Some Thoughts on SUNDAY SCHOOLS,

ON THE
BAD PROVISION for the INFERIOR CLERGY,

AND
Several ANECDOTES of former ARCHBISHOPS.

By a Presbyter of the Church of England.

" Malus Pastor dormit supinus."

L O N D O N :

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LETTER I.

TO THE

ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY.

I Cannot suppress my indignation, at being obliged to read that wretched composition of dullness and inconsistency, sent to all churches and chapels under the denomination of a Prayer for his Majesty's recovery. Devoutly as that event is wished for by all ranks, orders, and degrees of men; how dissatisfied must they feel themselves, when they find such languid supplications put into their mouths, expressed in language which would have much better suited the days of Edward the VIth, than the enlightened æra in which we live. But why do I disgrace the venerable prelates who compiled our English li-

turgy, by comparing their prayers with that which is the subject of our present discussion, and is only remarkable for its inelegance and absurdity.

Were such a theme as the restoration of our Sovereign to his former health and happiness, given to a Westminster school-boy, as a subject to declaim upon; were his production as inanimate, and ungramatical, as the prayer published with your Grace's sanction, I am very well persuaded he would undergo a severe literary or corporal punishment; especially if Dr. Markham, your worthy coadjutor, occupied the place which he did formerly. On this account I hope that our English newspapers are not dispersed in Gath, nor published in the streets of Askelon, for they gravely assure us, that the two Archbishops, and four of the Right Reverend Bench, met in solemn conclave, and this prayer was the result of their united deliberations!

Would

Would to God, that only those men were exalted to dignified stations in our church, who were eminent for their learning and piety, that their continuance in those stations depended on the exertion of their abilities in its ornament and defence; then, and not till then, will the best ecclesiastical establishment in the world be the most ably supported, and we shall not have to lament, as we do at present, that its chief, if not its only excellence, is to be attributed to its original constitution.

But the composition itself is not the only objection to this *important* prayer; the charge of heterodoxy may very fairly be urged against it.

“ May it please thee to remove from him
 “ the visitation with which for the punishment
 “ of our transgression, Thou hast seen it good
 “ to afflict him.”

I have heard, my Lord, that the sin of Adam is imputable to his offspring; and our
 reformers

reformers thought it necessary to let this stand amongst other articles of our Christian faith. Though I am inclined to think from its being so seldom referred to in the book of Common Prayer, and so rarely enforced in the present day, by either Bishops, Priests or Deacons, that, upon a revision, this doctrine would be omitted. Be that as it may, your Grace has amended the matter with a vengeance, and visited the sins of the children upon their father—the king being undoubtedly the father of his people. That the impurity of the fountain may contaminate the streams, is reconcileable with common sense; but that the streams should infect their source, requires some sophistry to demonstrate. This reminds me of the fable of the wolf, who quarrelled with the innocent lamb for making the water muddy, though he drank at a considerable distance from the wolf, and at a much greater from the fountain whence it flowed.

Perhaps you might have had this fable in your remembrance when the prayer
was

was composed, or a calamity may have befallen your Grace by a derangement of your faculties, for whose sins I know not, but sincerely hope, that it is not for those of the inferior clergy.

But it is my duty as a son of that church, of which, next to his Majesty, your Grace is the supreme head; if I cannot find an absolute excuse for dullness and heterodoxy, to do all in my power towards an alleviation of those evils of which the people under your pastoral care so heavily complain. Arduous as the task is, I will however attempt it, lest the gold of human learning having become dim, and the bright gold of sound divinity changed, the hearts of both Prince and people should be sad, and that without hopes of recovery.

Your Grace has been recently advanced to the archiepiscopal chair, from sitting in one much inferior at the Duke of Marlborough's table, and one still more subordinate at Gloucester;

etter; consequently you have not had many opportunities, if any, of publishing prayers on public occasions. You may have had it in contemplation to venture this, as your first performance, that your future improvement may be the more visible. If this be the case, which I sincerely hope it is, we shall all have occasion to rejoice, that your Grace forms a contrast to one of your predecessors now with God, of whom the great Warburton sarcastically remarked,—“ That Secker’s prayers “ were like Cibber’s Odes, the last always the “ worst.”

LONDON,

November, 17, 1788.

LETTER

LETTER II.

TO THE

ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY.

WHEN I did myself the honour of animadverting on your Grace's prayer for his Majesty's recovery, I did not imagine that I should so soon have occasion to resume the correspondence on the same subject; but as the publication of prayers seems to be coming into fashion, I think that they are very fair subjects for approbation or censure; I shall accordingly use the freedom of an Englishman, and give you my sentiments on one now before me, composed by the Jewish High Priest, and delivered with great fervour at the Synagogue last Saturday.---It seems that the Jews have notions of praying, equal,

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at least, if not superior to that of Christians, their devotions being accompanied with almsgiving. Like Cornelius the Centurion, their alms and their prayers form one sacrifice, and go up for a memorial before God.

On the perusal of this prayer, I was very much mortified by comparing it with that published by the High Priest of the established church—The marks of true devotion—the dignified language—the scriptural references—the grammatical propriety of the one, are so apparent, when contrasted with the other, that I sincerely recommend it to your Grace to substitute one for the other. Exchange, they say, is no robbery, therefore send the Christian prayer to the synagogue, and adopt that of the Jews in our churches. In point of doctrine, there is very little difference, though there is in the composition. Nay, excepting the conclusion of your own prayer, which implies your belief in a Mediator, the Israelites has the preference even here;
for

for he does not inculcate that absurd article of faith, that fathers are punishable for the iniquities of their children. Indeed, since my last letter, a new thought has suggested itself. As this prayer was composed at the express command of the Privy Council, where the Lord Chancellor has some power, it is possible that the petition alluded to, might have been inserted at his Lordship's instigation, being very good law, though very bad divinity. According to the constitution of England, the King can do no wrong—*ergo*, he must be afflicted unjustly, unless a cause is found in the transgression of his subjects.

I shall now insert the two Prayers in distinct columns, that the public may determine on the propriety of the preceding remarks.

B 2

O merciful

*Christian High Priest.**Jewish High Priest.*

O Merciful God, in whose hands are the issues of life and death, accept, we beseech thee, the supplications of thy servants who call upon thee in this time of their trouble.

We acknowledge, that for our manifold sins and wickedness, we are most worthy to receive thy chastisement. But thou, O God, in thy wrath, thinkest upon mercy. Vouchsafe, therefore, to hear the prayers of thy people, who with contrite hearts turn unto thee. Let thy merciful goodness regard their petitions, which they offer unto thy Divine Majesty, in behalf of our Sovereign Lord the King, and thy people committed to his care. *May it please thee to remove from him the visitation with which, for the punishment of our transgression, thou hast seen it good to afflict him.* Let

HE that dispenseth salvation unto Kings, and dominion unto Princes; who delivered his servant David from the destructive sword; who maketh a way in the seas, and a path in the mighty waters; may that God bless, preserve, guard, assist, exalt, and highly aggrandize our most gracious Sovereign Lord King George!

May the supreme King of Kings, through his mercies, which are infinite, grant him long life, preserve and deliver him from all manner of trouble and danger! may he be pleased to send the King a perfect cure, to heal and strengthen him!

We beseech the Supreme Being to remember his just and pious actions, so that they may intercede in his behalf, and cause all his pain to be removed from him.

thy gracious Providence guard and support him. Give a blessing to the means used for his recovery : restore him, we pray thee, to his former health, and grant that he may continue, by his piety and wisdom, to maintain among us the blessings of true religion, civil liberty, and public peace, till it shall please thee to call him, full of years, and rich in good works, unto thy heavenly kingdom.

Extend, O Lord, thy mercies to the Queen, the Prince of Wales, and all the Royal Family ; be favourable and gracious to them, and hide not thy face from them in their affliction. Let thy heavenly grace guide and direct them, and may they receive from thy Holy Spirit those consolations which thou only canst bestow.

Finally, we entreat thee, that we, who now cry unto thee in our distress, may in

O Lord God ! we beseech thee now to heal our Lord the King, as thou didst heal Hezekiah King of Judah. Raise him from the bed of sickness, lengthen his days, and grant him a life of blessing, health, and mercy ; as it is written, Prov. iii. 2. *For length of days, and long life and peace, shall they add to thee.*

May the Almighty God be pleased, in his mercy, to remove all pain, trouble, and anxiety from our gracious Queen Charlotte, his Royal Highness George Prince of Wales, and all the Royal Family, so that they may soon rejoice in the recovery of our most gracious Sovereign ! Amen. Selah.

thy good time be enabled to give thanks unto thee in thy holy place; for that thou *hast* regarded the petitions of thy servants, and restored our Sovereign to the ardent prayers of his people. Grant this, O Lord, for Jesus Christ's sake, our only Mediator and Advocate. Amen.

Upon the comparison, your Grace may perceive that this Prayer of the Jews is greatly superior to that which the inferior clergy are obliged to read in the respective parish churches.—You will also condescend to remark that this is only a translation from the original Hebrew. It is an old observation, that a translation is always inferior to the original, and that only those subjects are benefited by it, who undergo a change, not from darkness to light, but from one Bishopric to another.—Your Grace is on the pinnacle of preferment to which many look up; and when thus elevated, very few look down upon those who were once in station and dignity their equals,

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at *least*, and continue to be their superiors in every other respect.—This being the case with modern ecclesiastics, I cannot aspire to the distinguished honour of your Grace's notice; and I may presume the highest favour you will confer on these pages is, that they will be thrown by amongst other waste papers, or perhaps they may be distinguished by singeing a fowl in your Grace's kitchen.

LONDON,

November 19, 1788.

LETTER

LETTER III.

TO THE

ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY.

IT is naturally expected from those, who are exalted to any dignity in church or state, that they should devote their time and talents to the conscientious discharge of their different functions.—Modern times produce many instances to the contrary, in the former of these establishments; as we see those who were good philosophers and divines, previous to their advancement, degenerate into mere drones afterwards.—Sermons and philosophical tracts have, much to their honour, been published by a few of the Right Reverend Bench, and contrary to the general practice of Courts, the authors have met with the deserved promotion

tion.—When this does happen, great credit is reflected upon those more immediately concerned, and *the many* are led to wish that such qualifications were *always* the road to preferment.—We should not then hear bishops *preach* in a manner that would disgrace even school boys to read.—Native dullness would never be adorned with the mitre and lawn, and those designed for the meanest mechanical employments, would never rise to the most valuable stations in the Christian church. Weavers of worsted would never be suffered to change their occupations for that of preachers of sermons.

But of the few, my Lord, who really have deserved this promotion, what can we say to their subsequent conduct. Do we see any new exertions of genius—any fresh examples of piety and learning? One would really imagine that a powerful narcotic was administered to our bishops on taking their seats in the House of Lords, which conduced to their fu-

ture stupidity and listlessness. Indeed the latent piety of some of their Lordships has been re-kindled, and its lambent flame has appeared in seconding the wretched plan of a Gloucester Printer, in promoting Sunday Schools, and what they were not at the trouble to invent, they have been at the pains to recommend, in the triennial compositions of dull advice given to their parochial clergy, where they condescend to term those brethren, who, during the three years beside, are refused admittance at their palace gates.—In this recommendation their Lordships may have taken a few blackguards out of the streets on Sundays, who infest them all the week besides, and are the means of doing, what many dread will be the consequence, putting it in their power to be more completely wicked, rendering them dissatisfied with their situations as hewers of wood and drawers of water—detaching them from the plough and the loom, and putting them into a sphere for which they were never designed.

Should

Should any of these Sunday-taught youths, by the encouragement the bishops have already given them, be induced to make application to their Lordships for holy orders, let me seriously intreat the interference of your Grace's high authority in causing such application to be rejected, for this, among many other reasons; that there are more already by thousands who wear the churches livery, without being fed at her altar. *A curacy* in the present day, unless it be in a very retired corner of the kingdom, requires as much interest to procure as a living did formerly. The shameful practice of *selling* presentations, now so general, has even become an example to rectors and vicars, who actually sell *their curacies*.—The custom of *selling degrees* in our universities; or which is tantamount, selling that which entitles to them, a known mode of procedure with at least one of our dignitaries, who has amassed a considerable fortune in this and in other ways equally reputable; this very *commendable custom* extends itself to

selling titles and testimonials for holy orders, if not holy orders themselves. Buyers and sellers in the temple are now so frequent, and the price is so enhanced, that many freehold estates are sold cheaper than livings. A priest who has not the means of *purchasing* a cure of souls, be he never so learned, pious, or eloquent, is obliged to go in rags; and when he indulges in the luxury of a dinner, he must go to the cheapest ordinary he can find, tho' it be situated in the reputable parish of St. Giles. In order to provide for the ensuing meal, he must make application to a Clerical Register-office, from whence, if he is a favourite of the Leech who keeps it, and it happens to be a wet night, he may be sent to a remote part of the town to bury a corpse, for which service he is paid half-a-crown, deducting a shilling for the office-keeper.—These are your rewards, ye patterns of learning and virtue, who do not, dare not, cringe at a minister's levee, nor flatter a mitred ecclesiastic!

Shall

Shall I conjure your Grace to attempt a reformation of those dreadful abuses; to stem the torrent of corruption which pervades all ranks and degrees in the Christian church?— I know the answer I shall receive, if any be vouchsafed: “ That innovations are dangerous;—that the ark must remain untouched;—that an open door will be spread to all kinds of heresies and schisms;—and, in short, that things had much better remain as they are, than subject them to so much hazard.”——These are the ostensible reasons; but I dare assert, that the most uninformed reader of these pages is well acquainted with the real ones. The *revenues* of the church are so considerable, they are productive of so much consequence, and so many conveniencies, that it would be the last degree of impolicy to attempt an innovation in *any* part, lest it should tend to the alteration of the whole.

As I have mentioned the impropriety of admitting so many candidates into holy orders,

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as servers of ale are some times admitted to serve at the altar, as the unqualified are often accepted, to the utter rejection of those who are otherwise, I will relate an anecdote of one of your Grace's predecessors, who attempted the examination of a young man applying for admission to the Christian ministry.

A person of very mean appearance and shabby attire, after repeated applications at the gates of the Archiepiscopal Palace, and as repeated refusals from pampered menials, was at last admitted to his Grace's study.—The Roman pontiff himself, claiming immediate deputation from heaven, could not have treated a wretch with more Luciferian pride and haughtiness, than this High Priest of the Christian religion (distinguished above all others for inculcating meekness and gentleness) did the poor candidate.—Through much entreaty, the young man obtained leave to construe part of the Greek Testament and Latin Articles before his Grace, who vouchsafed, in a tone of much

much consequence, to approve his translation—“Your Grace does approve it,” said the candidate?—“Yes,” said the archbishop; “I did not imagine you could have construed so well.”—“You really did not? then, I must inform your Grace, that I have purposely misconstrued every word, imagining that you were not competent to determine whether I did so or not; and I should be ashamed to receive holy orders from such unclassical hands.”—He immediately retired, to the utter confusion of the Archbishop, who rang his bell, sent for him back, and offered him a large pecuniary reward to conceal the affair.—The reader will rejoice to hear that the young man’s virtue (like that of Andrew Marvel) was equal to his learning; and though money he wanted, to satisfy urgent demands, he would not receive any in so disgraceful a manner.—We may very fairly conclude, that the Archbishop never attempted the examination of any other candidate, but left this duty, with many others to his chaplain, unless he adopted the wise method

method of another Bishop lately departed this
life, who, when he could not fairly rid himself
of an examination, always held an English
translation in his hand.

LONDON,
November 22, 1788.

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